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DEBORAH'S CONCEPTION OF YAHWEH.

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NOTICE first the similarity of Deborah to the prophets and prophetesses of other ancient peoples. She "used to sit under the palm tree of Deborah," doubtless the same sacred tree that is mentioned in Gen. 35:8. Presumably she drew her responses from the rustling of its leaves, as other Semitic seers were accustomed to do. The children of Israel came to her for "decision," no doubt on such trivial matters as later were referred to Samuel (1 Sam. 9:6). Her wide influence she used to stir up hostility against the Canaanites, and she marched at the head of the army like an ancient German prophetess.

Can we speak of Deborah as inspired? What is she more than a clever fortune-teller and sagacious strategist?

The problem here is the same that we meet in the case of all the prophets. How can we recognize the natural historical basis of their teaching, and at the same time hold fast belief in their inspiration? The solution is found in a deeper conception of the nature of inspiration. Its true test is not the way in which a message comes, but its *intrinsic character*.

1. The idea of God which the song of Deborah discloses is one that bears in itself evidence of its truth. Yahweh is not a nature-god like the gods of Canaan. Unlike the Baalim, he is not confined to a particular tree, or spring, or sacred cave. He can manifest his presence and his power in the most distant places. Not only at Sinai, but also in the hill-country of Ephraim and in the hearts of the warriors of Israel, he reveals himself. He is not confused with any or all the powers of nature. He is not the sun, or the sky, or the storm-cloud, but the Lord who rules over them. The storm-cloud is his chariot, the wind that rustles in Deborah's sacred palm is his angel, bidding her to summon Israel to battle and to curse the people of

Meroz who basely refuse to come to the help of Yahweh. The earthquake, the tempest, and the rain are the weapons that he uses to overwhelm his enemies. Even the stars are only his servants, who at his bidding fight against Sisera.

Yahweh's pre-eminence above nature lies in his *moral* character. He has chosen Israel in love to be his people. With singular frequency in the song we meet the expressions "God of Israel" for Yahweh and "people of Yahweh" for Israel. There is a community of interest between the divine and the human. The wrongs of Israel are the wrongs of Yahweh, and its victories are his victories.

2. The idea of duty which the song of Deborah presents is one that bears its own evidence of inspiration. The first of all duties is not the bringing of offerings, but the surrender of one's self to the will of God. Loyalty to him shows itself in the unity and in the unselfishness of his worshipers.

3. The hope of the song of Deborah is one to whose inspiration the moral consciousness bears testimony: "So shall perish all thy enemies, Yahweh; but thy friends shall be as the sun when he rises in his power." If Yahweh is a righteous God, he will not only demand righteousness, but he will ultimately realize it in the world.

It was this quality of her message that gave Deborah herself the certitude of its truth, so that she was able fearlessly to summon the warriors of Israel in the name of Yahweh, and to say to Barak: "Up, for this is the day in which Yahweh hath delivered Sisera into thy hand." It was this that caused the message to find such a quick response in the hearts of the true men of Israel to whom it first came, and it is this which still convinces us, as we read it, that Deborah was more than a mere soothsayer.